

House Resolution No. 2009

Whereas, the members of the Missouri House of Representatives hold in high esteem those Show-Me State organizations which valiantly try to compensate for the inadequacies of the past by educating the present and preparing for changes in the future; and

Whereas, the Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center and Museum has taken upon itself the noble task of ensuring that York, a black slave who accompanied Army Captain William Clark on the historic Lewis and Clark Expedition, receive some of the honor and glory that was his due at the end of what was one of the great exploratory journeys in history; and

Whereas, York was a full participant in the Lewis and Clark Expedition which traveled 8,000 miles across the uncharted regions of North America west of the Mississippi and south of Canada after the Louisiana Purchase was completed; and

Whereas, York's achievements as a hunter, laborer, caregiver, and explorer helped lead the way to the addition and settlement of what would become eleven midwestern and western states, namely Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Oregon, South Dakota, North Dakota, and Washington; and

Whereas, York established many firsts for Americans of African heritage, including being the first black American to travel across the North American continent above Mexico; the first black American to participate in a democratic, pluralistic election; and the first black American to engage in important negotiations with the native American tribes of the Upper Missouri River; and

Whereas, despite his impressive contributions to the success of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, Meriwether Lewis did not include York's name in his report to Secretary of War Dearborn at the conclusion of their travels; and

Whereas, the Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center and Museum is petitioning the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee and the Postmaster General of the United States to issue a stamp bearing a picture of York prior to the January 15, 2007, two hundredth anniversary of the Meriwether Lewis report which failed to acknowledge the slave's numerous selfless contributions to the welfare of the Lewis and Clark Expedition:

Now, therefore, be it resolved that we, the members of the Missouri House of Representatives, Ninety-second General Assembly, join unanimously to applaud the significant undertaking by the Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center and Museum on behalf of York, a black slave and servant to Army Captain William Clark of the historic Lewis and Clark Expedition, and to convey this legislative body's heartiest best wishes to all of those involved in the request to have a likeness of York printed on a United States Postal Service stamp; and

Be it further resolved that the Chief Clerk of the Missouri House of Representatives be instructed to prepare a properly inscribed copy of this resolution in honor of the Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center and Museum.

Offered by _____
Representative Yvonne S. Wilson
District No. 42

I, Catherine L. Hanaway, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Ninety-second General Assembly, Second Regular Session, do certify that the above is a true and correct copy of House Resolution No. 2009, adopted April 21, 2004.

Catherine L. Hanaway, Speaker